**Orford Conservation Commission (OCC)**

**DRAFT Meeting Minutes: October 15, 2020**

**Meeting held via Zoom due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements**

**Present via Zoom**: Members: Ted Cooley (Chair), John Miller (Vice Chair), Craig Putnam, Carl Schmidt, Tom Bubolz, Harry Pease. Alternates: Emily Bryant (Assistant Sec’y)

Meeting was called to order at 7:04pm.

Emily was seated as member.

**1.Minutes of 9/17/20**. Approval of these minutes was tabled till next meeting. Ted will review them.

**2. Land Use Agreements**: Ted has not been able to get in touch with Nate Tullar to have him sign the land use license agreements for the Boat Landing and Orford Conservation Land parcels, and asked that if anyone reaches him they should encourage him to get in touch about this.

**3. Orfordville Road Culvert Project**. John reported that the wetlands permit application that Horizons Engineering put together is still awaiting approval. NH DES requested more information. An extension was granted. There may be some additional charges; we are waiting for the head engineer on the project to return from vacation to get an update. The landowner still needs to sign off on the project as well.

**3. Natural Resources Inventory**. John sent out some additional chapters for members to review. Emily submitted the chapter on conserved and Current Use lands. A chart showed the increase in the amount Orford land enrolled in Current Use from its start in 1973 till 2019.

**4. Conservation Commission Budget for 2021**. Ted presented a proposed 2021 budget for the Commission to review before submitting it. The budget is due to Select Board (SB) by Oct 20.

Proposed budget Summary:

**Item 2020 budget 2020 YTD Proposed 2021**

1. Water (E. Coli) Testing: $1250 $850 $2280
2. Mowing $500 $440 $500
3. Legal/Professional Fees $30 $635.50 $300
4. Dues and Subscriptions $250 $250 $250
5. Advertising $120 $0 $120
6. Travel Reimbursement NA NA $210

Total $3660

*Item 1, water testing*: increase to $2280. Ted discussed the water testing issue with Tom Steketee (SB). We had some high E. Coli readings this summer, and since it is hard to add testing in a timely matter when there is a high reading, they suggest it would be a good idea to plan ahead for weekly rather than monthly tests at the swimming beaches (Indian Pond, Upper Baker Pond, and Lower Baker Pond), at least for the coming year. The remaining seven locations along the brooks would be tested monthly.

Tom S. suggested that the Highway Department could help out by taking the tests. Harry expressed concern that the Highway department has other priorities than following the particular protocols for water collection, filling out chain of custody forms, and coordinating with the courier, etc., and it might be better for CC volunteers to continue doing the tests. Harry volunteered to do the weekly tests at Upper and Lower Baker Ponds, and Craig volunteered for Indian Pond.

*Item 2, Mowing*: Requesting the same amount for 2021.

*Item 3, Legal/ Professional fees*: This year’s actual expenditure included legal opinion on the Land Use Agreement for the Boat Landing and the Orford Conservation Land. Such consultation is not anticipated for next year.

*Item 4: Dues and Subscriptions*: Requesting the same amount: $250 to cover the annual membership dues for the NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC). They provide legal advice and seminars, etc.

*Item 5: Advertising:* Requesting the same amount. Thiswould cover legal warning in newspapers for hearings (e.g. on expenditure of Conservation Fund monies for purchase of real estate or easements).

*Item 6, Travel Reimbursement*: John suggested that we request mileage reimbursement for water testing. There would be approximately 360 miles total at the federal rate of $0.58 per mile.

***Motion*** (Ted/John): to approve in principal the proposed budget outlined above, total $3660, to be presented to the SB. The motion carried.

**5. Invoices**

a. From Alan Dyke for Mowing 9/26/20: $80.

***Motion*** (Ted/Craig): to pay $80 to Alan Dyke for mowing. The motion carried.

b. From NHACC for annual dues for FY2021: $250. The invoice says this is for 2020 dues, but this is presumed to be a typo, since this is the time of year we usually pay for the next year’s dues.

***Motion*** (Ted/Tom): to pay $250 to NHACC for dues. The motion carried.

c. From the Town Attorney for Legal Services on the land use agreement: $102.50.

***Motion*** (Ted/Harry): to pay $102.50 to the Town Attorney for Legal Services on the land use agreement. The motion carried.

**6. Easement Monitoring**. The Society for the Protection of NH Forest (SPNHF) sent a letter requesting that the Town monitor the Richardson and Schwaegler easements. Harry and Emily volunteered to do this. Ted will forward the letter from SPNHF on to Harry and Emily.

**7. Project Updates** John provided an updated written Projects Status Report. Some of the items in the report were discussed at the meeting:

**a. Foreign invasives – Japanese Knotweed**. John and Carl S. reported that a new landowner in town, Leslie Garamella, asked for assistance with removing Japanese Knotweed on Tannery Rd -- she asked if there might be grants or funds available for this. John contacted her with information we have gained about knotweed.

**b**. **Jacobs Brook remediation area**: John reported. On Rte 25A near bridge street, NH DOT replaced a culvert – this destroyed some of the plantings done last fall, and raised the “bench” created as part of the remediation. There is disagreement about whether the culvert was existing. In a Sept 19 meeting with Chris Turgeon (NH DOT District 2), Ron Rhodes (Conn. Riv. Conservancy), John Miller and Emily Bryant (CC), and Deenie Bugge (neighbor), Chris T. said he would look into whether DOT could purchase new plants, and said that DOT would rework the bench back to the previous level this fall. Since then Chris T. has indicated that they cannot replace plants, and the reworking of the bench may be delayed till spring. Any replanting should wait till after the bench is fixed. We need to find funds for new plants.

**c. Knotweed again.** Terry Straight of the Highway Dept. said that it is OK to leave the knotweed cuttings behind the tanks at the highway department land till spring, and he will help move them to the sand pit for burning in the spring. It has been to dry to burn this fall.

**8. Web site and virtual events.** Ted encouraged members to contribute photos and links for the CC web site.

**9. Plans for 2021 for dealing with knotweed.** John said he thought this year we overestimated how much volunteer help we could get to deal with the knotweed – we need to regroup. We do have two landowners, Leslie Garamella and David Gustavson, who are interested in removing knotweed from their land. The beauty of the “sandwich method” of knotweed removal, using layers of mulch and plastic, is that once the initial work is done, it takes no maintenance. Perhaps the Highway Dept could help by contributing and delivering more mulch for additional areas. Emily suggested that we should keep on with the method of repeated pulling / weeding along Tillotson Falls Rd.

**10. Commissioner terms and recruiting**: We have an opening for an alternate member, and terms for Harry, Craig, Emily, and Fran will be up in March 2021. Ted encourage members to think about whether they want to stay on, and to start looking for recruits now.

**Other business**:

Carl S. reported on Mountain View (aka Billy Brown) Farm:

The barns: There has been progress in the past 2 weeks; David Bischoff and Tim Cook figured out what materials are needed, and bought them. Lenny Gray has installed new sills on the East and West sides, new window frames have been put in, old shingles have been removed, and drainage work with crushed stone has been done. The fund raised for the purpose is depleted. Still to do: Vertical siding needs to be installed where the shingles were removed. It will take 1 – 2 days of work with Lenny and volunteers to finish up, hopefully by the first week in November. Jason Berard of Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) may be able to locate a volunteer to help, but Carl encouraged members to volunteer or find volunteers as well.

The barn project was featured in the UVLT annual report, complete with a painting of the barn.

Alison Marchione of UVLT reported that the Star Gazing Party at Mountain View Farm was a great success – 70 + people attended (all socially distanced). They will have the event again next year with the same presenter.

Beaver situation: UVLT is not going to move the fence.

Other improvements: UVLT has put a stile in so that walkers can go over the fence, and has installed an information kiosk.

***Motion*** (Tom/John) to Adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11pm

Minutes taken by Emily Bryant.

Next meetings: Nov 19, Dec 17, likely via Zoom